

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
September 20, 2017



PAT PEREZ

MARK STEVENS: Like to welcome Pat Perez. Pat, you're making your first start in the TOUR Championship. I know that's an important thing for every player to do, and for you personally that's got to be a huge milestone for you. If you want to talk a little bit about that and then we'll have some questions.

PAT PEREZ: Yeah, I didn't think it was going to take me 16 years to get here, but it has and I'm just going to enjoy every minute of it. It's awesome to be here, that's all I can say really.

MARK STEVENS: And you were out playing this morning, you've played the last couple days. Why don't you give us some general thoughts on the course.

PAT PEREZ: Well, I've seen it enough on TV watching every year so I had kind of an idea. Obviously it's different when you get here and you see the lay, but the greens are amazing, the fairways are in incredible shape. Looks like we're going to have good weather all week. It's just right there in front of you. It's been a while since we played a course that's just kind of straight and you get what you get. It's in great shape. I'm looking forward to playing it.

MARK STEVENS: What's one thing after all the years of watching it and then being here that you were like, oh, that's different than what I thought?

PAT PEREZ: Nothing really. 18 was exactly how it looks on TV, just kind of long, big green. Hit the middle of the green, that's it. Nothing really different. I knew you just had to hit it straight, keep it out of the rough. The greens, depending on how much speed they pick up, could be quick with some tricky pin placements, but it's pretty much what I thought it was going to be.

Q. The biggest significance of being here this week, is it the fact that you have a mathematical shot at \$10 million or the fact that you don't have to watch it on TV?

PAT PEREZ: Not watch it on TV. You know, for me to win the FedExCup, there's got to be a million things that have to go right and the biggest one happens to be me winning. So that along with the other stuff, I mean it's like -- for me it's like winning the Powerball because all the top guys would have to play bad, which they haven't done all year so for them to all do it at once and me win, it's about the same odds as the Powerball.

Q. Do you play Powerball?

PAT PEREZ: No, no chance. I bought a can of chew instead, got more enjoyment out of

that.

No, obviously winning the FedEx, I have such a different perspective because I wasn't playing last year. So this time last year I just got a spot in Malaysia and I was so excited Todd gave me that spot and I was getting ready for that. So the last thing on my mind was ever trying to get -- not trying to get here. Obviously that's always a goal but it's so far down the line when you're coming back and you've got this start and there's points that I'm going to need and the chance to make some money and that kind of stuff guaranteed. Plus I can get four days under my belt and get moving.

The amazing thing about it is I didn't think I was going to start until Sony if I didn't get that spot, so all of this may not have happened if I didn't go finish seventh in Vegas and then win at Mayakoba and I was already top-3 in the FedEx, I mean who knows what would've happened at Sony. I could have gone there and finished 60 and gotten two points, and who knows what happened on the west coast because I would have felt a little more pressure only with 14 more starts.

You know, to win the FedEx would be unbelievable obviously. I don't know, I'm not saying it's not in the cards but it's going to be very, very difficult. I'm not going to wish anybody to play bad. Those guys on top have played good all year, every one of them deserve to win it and I'm just going to enjoy the week and get ready to move on.

I've got three tournaments coming up in Asia which I'm looking forward to. I'm finally 33rd in the world now so I've got a chance to keep moving up on that and I'm hoping to get into Hero and play the Shark Shootout, and then I'm going to take some time off and go overseas. The year it's been, I can't imagine the fact that I'm here, for one, and have done it at 41, coming back after surgery, it's just fantasy land.

Q. Pat, with you getting into this tournament and then getting into all the big-boy events next year, seems like more and more people are going to get clued in to how good you are. Do you care about that or is it more just for you like a personal achievement?

PAT PEREZ: No, I'm not really worried. I'm the old guy and I'm not Phil. Phil has won so many times. Phil has been unbelievable for the sport and done so much. He's still that big name. I'm just a 41-year-old guy that had a great year for once and just hoping to continue on and see how much better I can get maybe and stay healthy hopefully.

I don't think I'm going to become -- unless I was to win this or win the FedExCup, the only way I would even move up a notch in anyone's eye that was better than anybody, you know, I just don't see that. The kids we have coming up, they're so good and they're going to be so good for so long. They're taking over the sport, which is awesome to see. Obviously everybody misses Tiger, everybody wants Tiger to come back, but we're talking about a 20-year gap now since Tiger came out and now the new generation's come up, they've taken over and they're doing a phenomenal job of it.

I want to see Tiger come back as well as anybody else, but we have Jordan and we have all these young kinds that are coming up playing amazing that I don't think I'll ever get that attention. That's fine, that's fine. I just like to go about my business, stay under the radar, try to make a lot of money and move on, that's it.

Q. When you look at it, you basically had to be 23 years old to win a tournament this year. How do you explain your best year in a year of all this young talent?

PAT PEREZ: Yeah, I mean the fact that -- I mean the farthest I fell in the FedEx was 14. So I think more than anything that's pretty good for winning once and winning early and then missing the cut in both Opens and I had a decent Masters and PGA, but to never fall out of the top 14. I only fell two spots in nine weeks. I took a month off after The Open and I went on vacation and stuff like that. I thought it would drop and I didn't.

I think that's the most thing I'm proud of other than being here is the fact that I never fell outside the top 15 against the best players in the world. And if you look at some of the players I beat this year, I'll take that as a hell of a compliment to myself that I beat a lot of these guys and I'm here and I'm the oldest guy in the field and that kind of stuff. I take those things as quite an accomplishment.

When I get home next week and I kind of reflect on things I need to improve and this and that, I'll be very proud of what I've done this year because these guys are so good. They hit it a mile past me, they've got shorter clubs on every hole and they're just really good. The fact that I kind of kept up with them this year has been amazing to me.

Q. What is it you know about your game now that you wish maybe you knew 15 years ago?

PAT PEREZ: I don't know. I guess I'm just kind of at ease with everything. I guess when the game was taken away from me a year ago, I had a new perspective on -- there was a lot of things that kind of motivated me to come back but the one was let's see if we cannot have this happen again.

So I just have a kind of new perspective on life. My wife is fantastic, she's been with me. Her parents have been unbelievable as well. Just everything is great, everything's great at home. Me and Drew have worked great the last couple years. And obviously H, I've known him since high school so he's been like a brother to me. I spend more time with him than anybody on the planet. We just have a nice thing going. Everything's just more enjoyable.

I know that's easy to say because I've had a good year, but I've still had some bad days and some bad shots and I've just kind of let it go a little easier. You know, it took me a lot longer to probably mature, if you can even use that word for me, than anybody. I've just learned kind of how to let things go and -- I still get mad, I still get upset but I don't channel it in the ways that I used to. It doesn't roll over for an amount of time like it used to.

Getting that win that early was such -- it was so unexpected but I was so determined that day. When I woke up that Sunday I told my wife, I said, you know, wear something nice because I'm going to hold that trophy at the end of the day. I just knew it. There was something about it when I woke up. I was in the shower and I was staring at this point, this spot on the ground and I thought I can already see what's going to happen today and I'm going to go out and play as aggressive as possible in the first seven holes and I was already -- I already had a five-shot lead by that point. I told H, I said we're not going to let this thing go, we're going to win by 8 today. I had one bogey in the last 10 holes and still won, which is rare.

Things are just different, I don't know. It's a different time obviously. I'm 41 now, so things are just different. The golf is important but it's not as important. We're going to try to start a family soon and this and that.

I don't know, there's always a lot of pressure young, especially in today's age. I can only imagine what the kids going through today at like 15 to 21 watching Jordan and Justin and Hideki and all these kids that are coming up going, man, I've got to be that or I'm not going to be that great because these guys are doing it now and I'm not doing it. You know, I had Tiger and that was what everybody had to compete with. That was just one and you knew you were going to lose to him at least nine times a year, which was fine because that gave you a lot of other tournaments that you could win. Now any of these kids can win. They're winning 15, 16 times a year combined. That doesn't leave a whole lot left.

I don't know, I'm very at ease with life right now. I can't even believe I'm already thinking about like the Champ Tour and things like that coming up in nine years. I can't wait to get there. Cart, practice rounds, a couple beers maybe, nightlife, three-day golf. I can't wait for that kind of stuff. Fifteen tournaments. I mean, I'm already ready. That's nine years from now.

Everything is great right now. It's awesome. I couldn't be any happier with life and things going on. I know that's carrying into my golf and it just is what it is because I don't have a whole lot of pressure on me. People don't expect me to win. They don't expect me to be on teams and dominate and win majors. That takes a lot of burden off of me. I have the most pressure from myself anyway to do it because my game's a lot harder to play than a Dustin Johnson or Jason Day or Justin Thomas, guys that fly it 320. I mean, I can play from there. If I could play from their drives, who knows how much money I could make. But I can't, I'm 60 yards behind them.

So the game is a lot harder for me than them and it's only going to get harder as I get older. So that, it makes it easier for me knowing that I'm not a favorite, I'm not the crowd guy. I have the company The Chive behind me and William Murray Golf, which has brought out so many more fans. I hear it all day, Chive On, and it's awesome because it's like a big cult that I'm part of and it's awesome to see them and hear them all day. Overall, life is just pretty good now.

Q. Pat, you talk in general about just playing better, feeling more relaxed, not too much pressure, but is there one part of your game that kind of pushed you over the line this year?

PAT PEREZ: The putting has been everything. My short game has really saved me a lot. I fixed my eye-line last year. What's amazing is I switched putters after I won. I went down to PXG and I saw this putter in the showroom. This is when I was just trying to get in with PXG. I had won with the irons but I hadn't really gotten a call from Bob yet. I wasn't going to really push it, I was just going to play and see how well I could do and then see if any companies were interested at the end of the year.

Finally I got a call from Bob in February, but before that in December I went down there to kind of get my irons checked and this and that and I saw this putter in the showroom. I'm like, god, man, that thing looks unbelievable. It's called a Gunboat and I put it down and it looked perfect. So I went out and practiced, which I usually don't do in December. I went out there and told H, I said man, you're going to think I'm crazy, I know this, but I'm telling you this putter might be in. He looked at me like he always does, like you're an idiot of course.

I said no, no, I'm telling you, you've got to look at this, you've got to watch the way this thing rolls it. Sure enough, I used it for about three weeks, I put it in in Maui and finished third. I said well, that's done. I've used it all year.

And then funny enough I'm playing up at the course up north at The Rim and I get on the ninth hole on Sunday and I hit it in the bunker on the par 5 there and I just put my club down and get in the bunker and I here this cling and the shaft broke at the head. This is a Sunday before I'm getting ready to leave for New York.

I call up and I go, we've got a problem here, I've got to get this fixed today. He says we can't fix it because it's broken. I said all right. I said I'll see you tomorrow, see if we can get about 12 of these made, see if we can get something right.

But the quality of the PXG stuff is so good that they matched it just by the way they make it, which is awesome because any other club in golf, it's always never the same. And PXG matched it perfectly because they always make it out of one mold and it just came out perfect and it was the same. So I got lucky, I got lucky with that.

Q. There's so many perks that come with a top-30 finish out here. What do you see is the best one?

PAT PEREZ: We used to think that Maui was the best one because it was a winners category and there were only 32 guys this and that. But this by far knowing now is the best tournament you could possibly be in because it sets you up for next year. I obviously had a great year to get to here and then it sets you up for the majors, the WGCs. It's obviously

world ranking points while you're here with only 30 guys.

I think the biggest benefit is just the schedule. I'll probably still play the same tournaments. It's not like I'm going to take off anything, it's just the fact I get to add eight big tournaments to it. Anyone that plays golf out here, that's what they want. That's all Tiger focused on was the majors and the WGCs and that's how you really can stack yourself against everybody else and see how good you are once you get in those tournaments. That's really what it is about and I finally get a chance to have it to where I can finally see if I can have that really good year following this year. So I get my chance, there will be no excuses for anything and we'll see how good I get. But the biggest thing is the schedule.

Q. If you hit the Powerball and win the FedExCup this week, how would you use \$10 million?

PAT PEREZ: Quickly. Yeah, quickly. I might not live that much longer. I've got to start spending it.

Q. I don't know if you answered this earlier but kind of feeding off of that using this to build on next year, how do you make sure next year you don't put extra pressure on yourself?

PAT PEREZ: Well, that will be easy because it's not like all of a sudden I'm going to gain 50 yards and I'm going to be this big favorite and all this stuff. I'll just play my same game. I've pretty much played the same game I have my whole career. I've played good at certain tournaments. I don't hit it great all the time but really my short game has come alive this year. If you look at my hitting, you look at my numbers, they're not really that great but my short game has saved me a lot, really has saved me a lot this year. If I continue that, then it will just continue. When I play well, I putt well. That's how it is. I hit it decent all the time but my putter has really been on. Like I putted great at Boston, I finished sixth there. When I won at Mayakoba I led in putting and greens. And when I won last time at the Hope, same thing, I led in greens and putting.

That's kind of been my thing. When I don't get up and down or I don't putt well, if I'm really not hitting it that well and I'm putting bad, then I'm just not there. My game doesn't really change much. I can only really swing can kind of one way and if I make some putts I'll be around. If the course is right for me I might be able to get close enough to the lead.

But when those guys go, they just keep running, like Justin Thomas, these guys, they just have those extra gears that can get them on the par 5s in two. I can't get to the par 5s in two so my short game's got to be sharp. If I can't play the par 5s in 16 for the day, I'm losing ground, and there's a lot of days I play them in 20 and I've lost four shots in one day to these guys. It's hard.

So I definitely won't have any more expectation next year. I'm just excited to keep the train moving and see if I can keep up with everybody. I'm not going to go out there and go oh, I

made the TOUR Championship so I need to get to No. 1 in the world. It would be an amazing feat but it's going to take amazing things to happen, which -- and a lot of time, too. The majors are very hard. They obviously cater to the long hitters and the good short games and stuff like that. I knew at Erin Hills, I knew when I got there I knew I was going to have to play better than perfect to even have a chance to win that tournament. And I played pretty good, I missed the cut by one. It's just too long. I'm hitting rescue into these holes, these guys are hitting 7- and 6-irons, it's just odds. Brooks, I called six guys that would win that tournament and one of them did.

Q. How long have you been with Drew and was there ever a time in your first chunk of your career where you tried to overcomplicate things with your swing?

PAT PEREZ: You know, I've always tried to -- I watched Tiger since we were eight years old. I think he had the best action. I still think he does have the best action I've ever seen, it was just unbelievable. His swing was so perfect and flawless and I tried to copy and I just couldn't do it. I wasn't strong enough, I didn't have the positions. I just couldn't do it.

So I struggled with that for years upon years trying to make my swing what it wasn't. Then now I have things in my swing that I don't like but I don't really look at them anymore. I talk to Elk about this all the time, I don't like the way my swing looks on film but I have certain feels that if I can feel it in the swing, then that to me feels right and that looks right, but I don't like it on film, I think it looks terrible. There are so many positions I don't like. I hate the follow-through, I get left lean, my kneeing are in. There's so many things I just don't like about my game.

It's frustrating because I see these guys, perfect builds, they're tall and they're skinny and they've got all this strength, and then there's me who kind of waddles around. I don't like working out, I like to sit, kind of do nothing, so it's kind of my own fault I guess on the strength.

But I've always had those kind of deals where I guess I've just gotten to the point where I've owned my own stuff. I kind of know the shot I'm going to hit. There's a lot of holes I don't like so I'm just going to hit this shot out there and get it in play. It might be short but I've just kind of learned how to play my own deal and not really worry so much what it looks like or what it may produce.

MARK STEVENS: That and your humor is just why we all love you.

Q. The question is how long you've worked with Drew. If you can answer that in one sentence, that would be awesome.

PAT PEREZ: That's a good question. Jason Gore told me about him in May, I don't know, four years ago I think.

Q. That works.

PAT PEREZ: Three and a half years, I believe.

Q. In a nutshell, are you the only one in the field, your caddie made it here before you did? Didn't he caddie for Danny Lee here?

PAT PEREZ: I don't know, did he? Did he caddie for Danny?

Q. Yep.

PAT PEREZ: Bastard. He couldn't have because he doesn't know the course. No, he couldn't have. We played have Sergio today and Gary knew all the lines. Unless he's not telling me something. When was that, last year or two years ago Danny was year?

Q. It was last year he was caddying for Danny.

PAT PEREZ: No, no, so he didn't caddie for him. He wouldn't do that to me.

MARK STEVENS: Everybody good? Thank you as always for your time. Always a pleasure, Pat. Good luck this week.

PAT PEREZ: Good week.